

## ACT 264 ADVISORY BOARD

Recommendations for 2007 Interagency System of Care**Trauma**

**Issue:** During 2006, the Board identified the need for a trauma informed system to support children, adolescents and families. As a first step, the board recommended on-going trainings for all staff that work with youth and families to increase awareness of the effects of trauma, and that child and family serving agencies provide interventions for trauma that are consistent with evidence based or promising practices. The Board applauds the establishment by the Agency of Human Services of a Trauma Coordinator position and a Trauma Initiative to create a trauma informed system that provides training, enhances services, responds to the needs of those who work with trauma victims, increases public awareness, and develops policies that are sensitive to the needs of people with this history.

**2007 Recommendations:****AHS sustains and extends the trauma informed system.** Specifically:

1. Continue funding support for the instrumental position of an AHS Trauma Coordinator in order to pursue the goals of a trauma informed system.
2. Expand the AHS Trauma Steering Committee and the Vermont Child Trauma Work Group to include representation from Education. We feel that such representation is vital. The AHS Trauma Steering Committee and Child Trauma Work Group are encouraged to report annually to the Act 264 Advisory Board.
3. Each child and family agency develops a protocol for addressing their agency specific training needs around trauma for ongoing education, supervision, and mentoring.

**Interagency Agreement**

**Issue:** The expanded System of Care for children with disabilities needing services and supports from both DOE and AHS requires ongoing nurturance, training, visible regional supports, and accountability at all system levels.

**2007 Recommendations:****Assure sustained and accountable implementation of both Act 264 and the Interagency Agreement of 2005 through structures that will:**

1. Support the Board's ongoing leadership to the System of Care with continued staff support from the Division of Mental Health.
2. Provide ongoing accountability and quality management by implementing the evaluation plan that includes both quantitative and qualitative data collection to sustain the interagency initiatives.
3. Recommit to the annual report of the System of Care from the State Interagency Team (SIT) as required by Act 264.

4. Establish a minimum of a permanent 1.0 FTE staff position divided to represent education and human services expertise to help maintain a strong implementation oversight team across the key agencies and dedicate staff representing education and human services for training and team process problem solving at the regional level.

## Autism Spectrum Disorders

**Issue:** The numbers of children diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorders continue to increase dramatically; Vermont's annual rate of increase is 20%. Gaps in services across the state are many. The *Autism White Paper*, jointly researched, written and disseminated by the Department of Education and Department of Aging and Independent Living in 2005, clearly identified both the unmet needs and recommendations necessary to address them comprehensively and equitably.

### **2007 Recommendations:**

#### **Create an Implementation Group with diverse representation to develop Vermont's comprehensive action plan for building regional capacity across Vermont to serve children with autism and their families.**

Meeting the needs will require the plan to address:

1. a structure for information, referral, and service delivery in every region.
2. referral and information services for children and their families across environments over the life span that are research based and best practice
3. a definition of "intensive early intervention" services for children on the spectrum.
4. a standard for cross disciplinary assessment and program implementation across environments and agencies
5. a system of accountability that does not reside within one agency only
6. a funding mechanism to maximize the existing sources and to explore grant and private funding sources
7. training capacity across agencies that extends to families
8. establishment of a state wide registry for children with autism spectrum disorders
9. clarification of the role of Developmental Services for home and community support and intervention.

## Transition Age Youth

**Issue:** Many Vermont adolescents need assistance to successfully transition to adult life.

**Last year's successes:** This Board prioritized transition aged youth in 2006, recommending: (1) increased funding to the JOBS program; (2) creation of statutory language that ensures continuation of substitute care funding for young people in the state's child welfare system at least until they obtain a high school diploma or GED; and (3) the creation of an interagency Task Force to examine service improvement to transition aged youth. During FY06 the Agency of Human Services created three transition task forces; the recommendations of these task forces have been summarized in the report *Hope for the Future: A Plan to Support Vermont's Youth Aging Out of Foster Care*. The Career Start Steering Committee produced a similar report for systems improvements to youth with disabilities. The Act 264 Board endorses the content of both the *Hope for the Future* report and the Career Start white paper. Further, the Legislature discovered that the state's current Medicaid rules already allowed for an

expansion of categorical eligibility for young people aged 18-21. While 2006 saw some initial steps taken to improve services to transition aged youth, much work remains.

**2007 Recommendations:**

1. Strongly endorse AHS Secretary Cindy LaWare's desire to move the focus of the transition task forces beyond youth aging out of the state's foster care system. The Transition Task Force should expand its focus to consider youth experiencing homelessness, mental health issues, substance abuse, co-occurring disorders, physical or developmental disabilities, and/or transition out of Corrections.
2. Appropriate \$762,517 to fund the state's 12<sup>th</sup> and final JOBS program, providing access to a program that delivers excellent human and financial outcomes.
3. Create a fund within the Office of Economic Opportunity dedicated to providing housing supports to transition-aged youth.
4. Continue the promulgation of information about expanded Medicaid eligibility for youth aged 18-21.

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**ACT 264**

In 1988 the Vermont Legislature passed Act 264. The purpose of this law is to develop and implement a coordinated system of care so that children and adolescents with a severe emotional disturbance and their families receive the appropriate services and supports within the child's coordinated services plan.

**ADVISORY BOARD**

The Governor-appointed Advisory Board consists of nine members including equal numbers of parents, advocates, and providers. The Board's purpose is to advise the Secretary of the Agency of Human Services and the Commissioners of the Departments of Health, Children and Families, and of Education on:

- matters relating to children and adolescents with a severe emotional disturbance;
- the development and status of the system of care; and
- priorities on the system of care for annual submission to the legislature.

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